

# *Brooklyn Jewish Center*

## *Review*

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**NEW YEAR GREETING SECTION**

## FOUR CROWNS

Let us celebrate the service bestowed upon us  
by our venerable Rabbi Levinthal  
these two score and fourteen years;  
Let us celebrate the scholarship we have been  
favored by the opportunity to study  
at the feet of Rabbi Haymovitz;  
We are crowned with Torah!

Let us celebrate the selflessness of our leaders  
who have submerged their own cares  
to the needs of the Center;  
We are crowned with Temple Service!

Let us celebrate the good name of the Center  
these many years for making us  
disciples of Abraham, and instilling  
in us a liberal outlook;  
We are crowned with Acts of Lovingkindness!

Let us celebrate our bounty with generous gifts—now  
to our KOL NIDRE APPEAL!

ISRAEL H. LEVINTHAL, Rabbi

DAVID HAYMOVITZ, Rabbi

EMANUEL COHEN, President

LOUIS KRAMER, Chairman, Kol Nidre Appeal

## OPEN SEASON

By Louis Kramer

It's open season on the Jew. The president of a giant oil company snipes behind a letter to his huge army of stockholders and employees, asking for a change in the Middle East policy. Thus, he thinks, the fuel crisis will turn into instant energy. One of his cohorts takes to the advertising columns and subtly opens fire with the same aim in mind.

Fortunately, in reporting Social's letter, The New York Times alerts the reader to the fact that only 7% of our oil comes from the Mid-East.

A fanatic bunch of gangsters takes over a Japanese plane, flies it from one city to another, finally blowing it up to the glory of the Palestinians. Another group descends upon the Athens airport and without warning throws bombs and opens fire upon the gathered passengers in the lounge, killing three innocents and wounding many more. All because of their hate for the Jew, and in mistaken belief the passengers were on their way to or from Israel.

No one asks for an urgent meeting of the Security Council. Action sought after Munich has been enmeshed in a mass of verbiage. Frustrated, seeking to do what the United Nations fails to do, Israel sets forth upon an ambitious but abortive adventure, to capture guerilla leaders on foreign territory. Cries of condemnation are heard from friends and foe, and an urgent meeting of the Council is convened.

In Paris, two men broke into the attic of a house, set up a machine gun on the window sill overlooking a narrow street along which many of the 3000 guests to the Israel Embassy were passing to the Independence Day cele-

bration. But for a maid's screams, causing the men to flee, a slaughter would have ensued.

At home, a producer makes a film about the Superstar. The good guys are blonde and white, the bad are clad in dark garb, as in a western. Who are the bad guys, but the Jews, pictured as Christ-killers. Whether the film has merit is questionable, as witness the mixed reviews, is not of importance. The producer is raking up the coals, fanning the flames of anti-semitism.

Just as Israel has never been elected to the Security Council, so with a new UN economic commission for western Asia which is set up in such fashion as to deliberately exclude Israel. Even though this is a violation of the Charter, and despite the monetary contribution made by Israel to foot its expense, little is done by the community of nations to deal evenly with this young state. The Arabs have the say who will get in and it won't be Israel.

The merit system is going to pot with the headlong rush to a quota system, as witness the article by Rabbi Haymovitz in this issue of the Review.

Yes, be the attack by snipers or pot-shotters or subtlety, the season is open, and it's fashionable to hit the Jew, although the anti-semitic says the fight is on Zionism.

Our defense organizations are doing their share, following up each shot with the truth. The energy crisis is of the oil companies' own making. The Middle East countries are furious over the declining value of the dollars they have raked in for their slimy oil. With blackmail, the Arabs hope to restore the worth of our currency, but things aren't working out their way.

We can't expect ADL or AJCongress or AJCommittee to do the entire job of truth-squading. Our young people, so far removed from the Holocaust, must bear the brunt. They must be taught and they must learn who is the enemy. They must recognize what the subtle attack really is. No one can run away. There are too few in the vanguard of this fight.

We can't rely upon others to do our fighting; we must have a multitude, aware that an attack on Zionism is a euphemism for anti-semitism.

Israel's leaders must be careful of steps that might alienate the friendly nations, few they may be. After all, anti-semitism comes naturally and needs little to fan its flames. The oratorical society in the 42nd Street enclave does nothing about terrorism. The Security Council is stacked against Israel. We continue to walk a lonely road. Let us fashion our own weapons; we need not imitate the enemy. We must bide our time and hit hard by all means at our command. We shouldn't allow our frustrations to show, by invasion and kidnap. But we should use every legal means to down the anti-semitic here and abroad, and avoid the loss of our few friends.

LOUIS KRAMER

## OUR COVER

*This is a silver belt buckle worn with a kittel on Yom Kippur in Poland, and was made about 1883. The engraved inscription around the edges is from the prayers for the Day of Atonement: "For on this day shall atonement be made for you, to cleanse you: from all your sins before the Lord shall ye be clean" (Leviticus 16:30). The inscription in the center states: "This belongs to Jacob Schmertzlich." The buckle was a gift of Dr. Harry G. Friedman, and can be viewed in the Judaica Collection of The Jewish Museum, New York.*



# No Echo To God's Words At Sinai

Summary of sermon preached on Shavuot, 1973

by Rabbi Israel H. Levinthal

*(Rabbi's Introductory Note: Shavuot commemorates the giving of the tablets of the Divine Law on the mountain of Sinai. Moses shattered these tablets when he descended from the mountain and beheld the Israelite dancing before the golden calf which they had made in this absence. The enth of Tishre, the date of Yom Kippur, commemorates God's giving the second tablets, when He accepted the plea of Moses that He forgive His people. Because of the similarity of themes, this sermon appears in our New Year's issue of the Center Review.)*

The Bible portrays in detail the events marking the giving of God's Law to the Israelites at the mountain of Sinai. The Rabbis add to their description from oral traditions which came down to them through the ages. One Rabbi tells us: "When God proclaimed the Torah at Sinai there was a perfect stillness throughout the world. Birds did not chirp, animals did not roar—not a sound was to be heard." And then he continues with this additional comment: "And there was no *Bat-Kol*—no echo—to any of the words which God uttered." (Exodus Rabbah, 29:9).

Now, we can well understand the reason for the perfect silence that reigned throughout the world when the Divine words were uttered. God wanted the people to hear clearly every word of this Law—no competing sound was to be heard to mar this clarity.

But what is the meaning of the comment that no echo to these words was heard? I think that a great truth is here revealed by this ancient sage—a truth which is pertinent for our day.

I do not know how many of you have had the experience of hearing an echo. You will not hear it amidst the noise of urban life. But in the country, especially in mountainous or hilly terrain or in perfectly quiet surroundings, an echo is easily heard. The significant

fact about an echo is that it does not repeat the entire sentence or phrase uttered—only the last word or the last syllable or two is repeated by the echo. I recall that, while vacationing at Camp Ramah in the Poconos, we often walked to a high cliff, where we could look down at the valley or up to the mountains surrounding us, and playfully listened to the echoes of our words. "Good morning!" we would cry out. Sure enough, the echo would repeat, "morning." "Camp Ramah speaking!" we would add; and again the echo was heard, "speaking." Sometimes the first syllable of the last word was not clear, but the word did come through.

Here is the real significance of God's seeing to it that at this significant event the echo should be stilled. Certainly, the surroundings—the mountain before them, the absolute quiet that reigned—called for the echo to be heard. But, if it had been heard, the danger was possible that the people would have heard only the last word of each commandment. Instead of hearing *Lo signov*, "you shall not steal," they would have heard, *signov*—"steal;" instead of *Lo sirzach*, "you shall not kill," they would have heard *sirzach*—"kill," and so, for all the moral commands, the echo would have perverted their very meaning. The most important word, *Lo*, "Do not!," would have been eliminated.

Here is the tragedy that reigns throughout the world today. Almost everyone claims to be religious. We have churches, mosques, synagogues—and we attend them frequently. Even in the White House in Washington a Church service on Sunday mornings has now been instituted, which everyone connected with the White House is eager to attend. Americans generally still look askance at one who claims to be devoid of religious belief. Most Americans pride themselves that the Ten Commandments are the basis of our civilization.

The trouble is that they hear only the echo of these moral commands; the word, *Lo*—"Do not," has not reached their ears.

We marvel as we read or listen to the revelations of the Watergate scandals. We ask ourselves how it happened that men with fine education and breeding, men who certainly would affirm that they are religious, men assumed on all sides to be worthy of serving in the highest offices of government, should be associated with the illegal and immoral conduct disclosed. The answer is simple enough: They heard only the echoes of God's commandments, not the important word *Lo*, "Do not!" This explains why they did not even feel that they were doing wrong. And, perhaps the greater tragedy than the deeds themselves is that they were insensitive to the moral imperatives which should have guided them at those moments.

I remember reading a book by a philosopher and theologian, John Fiske, who lived at the beginning of this century. The title of the book intrigued me: "Lost—the Sense of Sin." That title aptly describes our age—we have lost the sense of sin; the very concept of sin has disappeared. We no longer feel a sense of shame when sinning. The only shame that we experience is, in the words of the prophet Jeremiah, "the shame of the thief when he is caught" (Jeremiah 2:26).

The glory of Jewish life in the past was that the Jews were conscious of sin. Not that they never sinned—but, when they did, they knew that they were violating God's law. In a significant prayer which the Jew recited, he said: "We are not so presumptuous or so arrogant as to say before Thee we have not sinned; we have sinned!" And because the Jew realized that he had sinned, he asked God's forgiveness and endeavored to perfect himself in the days to come.

Those of you who were brought up in the old-fashioned Jewish homes will recall that when our parents wanted to warn us not to commit an unfitting deed, they would utter the very meaningful word, *Lo*! "No"! The emphasis

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# American Jewry On The Threshold Of A New Era

By Rabbi David Haymovitz

*Excerpts from a speech delivered at a gathering of Jewish leaders in Johannesburg, South Africa.*

In order to acquaint ourselves with the problems and challenges of American Jewry today, I would like to define and clarify the unique position and historical experience of American Jewry in comparison with other Jewish communities. Only on this background can we approach the subject of our discussion with a better understanding.

The historical experience of the Jews in America was quite different from that of their brethren in Europe and in other countries. In most other countries the Jews lived in one, or a bi-national society, forming a religious and national minority of a particular social character, which was the result of conditions prior to emancipation.

In Europe, for example, a combination of the social and national struggles gave rise to a heightened feeling of alienation of the Jew. There was a constant conflict in society between the under-privileged masses and the highly-privileged classes; and both sides in this conflict, being afraid to lose their position, directed their hostility towards the Jewish minorities, thus causing the intensification of anti-Semitism and discrimination.

The same rule applies to many other societies where anti-Semitism is rampant. In American society, which consists of multiple ethnic groups, the Jews represented one minority amongst others, which had arrived in the United States, partly at the same time as the others. Some of these ethnic groups were much weaker than the Jews. Like the other ethnic groups, the Jewish immigrants, too, were distinct by their particular social character which was the result of their European heritage. However, as in Eastern Europe and in other countries, the Jews mostly did not succeed in establishing for themselves a strong position in the new social and economic orders against the competition of the majority groups. They found in the

United States, a vast country, open for their endeavors. Moreover, in the quickly expanding economy they could enter into competition with people of many other groups and nationalities. What had constituted their great weakness in Europe—the lack of roots—turned out to be an advantage in that competitive society. It gave the Jews greater flexibility and mobility. The change in status was quick, even though the beginnings were not easy. The Jews succeeded to move in one generation from the ghettos and the sweat shops and establish themselves in the center of the middle and upper middle class of the American society.

American Jewry, which at the beginning of the century, had the largest Jewish proletariat underwent the quickest and the most thorough process of the proletarianization. The special vocational structure of American Jewry anti-dated America's development towards service and education and so enabled the Jews to occupy a prominent place in this developing society.

The idealist of the American political system used to emphasize its unique, pluralistic character. This evaluation suited American Jews and strengthened their optimism and trust in their ultimate integration into an American society, in which they could retain also their Jewish particularity.

To our great dismay, this belief of American Jews was based on the wrong interpretation of the essence of American pluralism. It incorrectly took a point of departure in history for the desired goal. There is no doubt about the historical fact that American society has been constituted by multiple elements still recognizable in their diversity. But if we examine the ultimate tendency of the historic developments, there can be little doubt that the dominant trend points towards complete amalgamation and integration, where as the remaining diversity is no more than a qualification of this dominant trend, a remnant from the past. The trend was towards one American na-

tion, with one language and one national identity. Though the American nation never demanded of its citizens to deny their ethnic background, the force of integration and national unity gained such preponderance, that there was no longer any need for holding on to the ancestral national loyalty, and even its memory was only of secondary importance. American nationalism had an outright assimilatory character. The more distinguished ethnic groups wanted the immigrants from amongst other groups to assimilate socially, nationally and language-wise; the newly arrived and poorer groups were eager to be absorbed into the American culture, which had mainly been formed by the early immigrants, notably Anglo-Saxons.

In this unique land, assimilation was not a specifically Jewish problem; it was the problem of most immigrants. It was not forced upon them. It was the outcome of the liberal policy under which the Jews were free from religious discrimination. It is, therefore, only natural, that American Jews in their vast majority believed until very recently that there existed no Jewish problem for them, such as had been known in the "old country."

Apart from some exceptions, even the Zionists held the view that Zionism was a solution to problems of all diaspora Jews, save those in the United States. In their opinion, the Jewish world was by now divided into three categories; Eretz Israel, the Diaspora, and America. Even the best of Zionists believed that their Zionism derived from an identification with the fate of the Jewish people outside of the United States, but they denied the fact of common Jewish destiny. When, after the holocaust in Europe, American Jewry assumed the leadership of diaspora Jewry. Some went even further. It now became apparent that there existed a conflict between their claim to world leadership and their specific and privileged fate; somehow, it contradicted the unity of their philosophy. They began to believe and to preach, that the blessings of the American regime, its democratic nature, its tolerance and its pluralism, were exportable and could be applied to all free coun-

tries. Thus it would be possible to solve the Jewish problem the way it ostensibly had been achieved in American society.

This explains the shock and amazement of the Jewish community at the first signs of a re-emerging anti-Semitism in the United States. Especially the anti-Semitism of the Negro. The black revolt in the United States put a question mark on the dream of many leaders of the American Jewish community: that Jews in America have made it.

"Why is the wrath of the Negro directed so vehemently against the Jews?" they asked. Is this the beginning of a new trend of polarization which will again be directed against the Jews? Obviously, those who believed in assimilation or semi-assimilation as a solution to the Jewish problem, found the reason for the Negro hate in the fact that in many cities Negroes now live in formerly Jewish neighborhoods. It happens very often that Jews are still the landlords and shop owners, and this is the reason for the conflict between the black ghetto dwellers and the Jews. They thought, the only way to overcome the problem is to remove the Jew from the black ghetto and remove some of the Jewish professionals from their positions in order to make room for the Negroes and thereby restore the harmony between the groups.

But as time went on it became more apparent that there are deeper motivations for the hatred of the blacks. In attacking the foundations of the American order, the blacks were looking for its most vulnerable point. In their fight against the regime of equality and opportunity, according to merits, they sought out the Jews who had so successfully made use of that system of merit.

This brought the Jew back to his senses, to realize that American society, with its pluralistic approach, is not a solution for the Jewish problem. This society demands full assimilation, which the Jew cannot achieve. American Jewry forms a sub-population which did not succeed in assimilating, or did not want to assimilate. They are easily recognizable as a

group and can be easily isolated. Moreover, with regard to religion, they differ from the rest of the population and as such will always remain a minority, which will have to struggle for its rights. The strategy of the Negro struggle dictates a concentration of their assaults on the Jews. Once they succeed here, they may have made a decisive breach in the defenses of the regime and in the merit system. There they consider the Jew their chief enemy. They are neither impressed by the history of Jewish martyrdom, nor are they interested in Israel's contribution towards the development of black Africa. They even prefer to ignore the great help extended to them by the Jews in their struggle for civil rights. They hate the State of Israel because it is dear to the Jews of America, their first target in the anti-American struggle. For the same reason they sympathize with the Arabs, whose ancestors were the slave merchants who had sold them to the whites in America.

Even though these views are held only by a minority of militants and the majority of blacks do not openly adopt such philosophy and some of their leaders are very friendly to the Jews and to Israel, it nevertheless points to the general trend. The American social order has arrived at a turning point. It has been clear for a long time that the principle of integration did not fully apply to the Negro and it does not apply to the Jew because he cannot assimilate. The Negro rebellion has brought home this fact to all. It is possible that American society will be compelled to revise its avowed principles of the melting pot and the idealism of full integration. For a long time to come America will find itself in search of a path out of ethnic and racial strife which is plaguing it.

In such a development lies an inherent danger for the emergence of an American Jewish problem which includes the possibility of increasing anti-Semitism within the white community. There may be found considerable elements within the white population who will be prepared to make concessions to the black at the expense of the Jews who have become the chief target of Negro hatred.

Many symptoms indicate that American Jewry is at the threshold of a new era, one of conflicting tendencies, a period in which American Jewry will have to expect new struggles and new challenges. This does not imply that there will be physical danger beyond the general perils of increasing violence in the American society. It is improbable that the Jew will have to suffer from discrimination by law or by administrative measures, but it is quite possible that there will be increased pressure against Jewry in certain professions and certain positions in which they, in fact, occupy a privileged place. The attack on the merit system, the introduction of quota systems which has begun in mild form, is intensifying and increasing from day to day, and although, not directed against the Jews, it is designed and will have a great effect on Jewish life in coming years. But even more severe than the material losses may be the shock to the peace of mind if that development in society will continue.

This unexpected crisis can arouse a different and conflicting reaction, and thus deepen the existing conflict in the Jewish community. It can be expected that some liberal Jews will try to escape a confrontation with their own Jewishness and stress the needs for complete integration with American society, to continue the full support of other minorities while completely disregarding the rights of their fellow Jews. These will try to extricate themselves from a Jewish destiny by reasserting themselves in American society through an increased activity on behalf of minorities against the American establishment. Others may join the conservative camp of the white society which intends to strike out against the rebelling Negroes. In both cases they will only aggravate the emerging Jewish problem.

The time has come to give an answer which is Jewish in content, to take up the challenges of the new era, while saying yes to Judaism and being prepared for all the consequences of saying so. This could be American Jewry's greatest hour, if it has strength and wisdom to understand itself.

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# SWEET SINGERS OF ISRAEL

By Rabbi Mordecai H. Lewittes

Hebrew prayers and Hebrew poetry are intertwined.

Each morning, for example, in commemoration of Israel's liberation from bondage, the worshipper recites the oldest poem in Hebrew literature—the triumphant Song of Moses. The poet celebrates Israel's miraculous escape through the Red Sea, and vividly describes the congealed waters serving as a protecting wall while God lovingly leads His redeemed people to safety.

You led the people whom You  
have redeemed.  
You guided this nation to their  
holy abode.

The synagogue service is particularly enriched by passages from the Psalms of David, the poet-monarch who was aptly called "the sweet singer of Israel." Thrice daily the congregation repeats the beloved Psalm 145 which gives expression to the concept of a provident and gracious God, loving and compassionate:

Near is the Lord unto all who  
need Him,  
Close to those who call upon  
Him in truth.

Similarly, the liturgy for Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur is replete with poetic compositions. The basic *Musaf* prayer for Rosh Hashanah is attributed to Abba Arika (Abba the tall one), a disciple of Judah the Prince. Abba Arika, who flourished in the third century, returned from the academy of Rabbi Judah in Palestine to his native Babylon where he founded the famous academy at Sura. He is generally known simply as Rav (Master). Although Babylon was devoid of Torah before Rav's return, so successful was Rav that Babylon outdistanced Palestine as a center of Torah.

Rav's poetic composition begins with the familiar *Alenu*, a favorite prayer which is also recited at the conclusion

of each service. The *Alenu* stresses the sovereignty of God whose rule of righteousness will some day be acknowledged by all mankind:

We therefore place our hope in  
You, O Lord our God,  
That we may soon behold Your  
triumphant glory,  
When You will remove abomina-  
tions from the earth

And idols will utterly vanish;  
When the world will be perfected  
under the Kingdom of the Almighty,  
And all humanity will call upon  
Your name  
As you turn the hearts of the wicked  
of the earth unto You.

The declaration of God's sovereignty is reinforced with Biblical verses affirming God as King (Malkhuyot). Rav now continues with a second basic motif — Rosh Hashanah as a day of remembrance. God examines man's deeds and stands in judgment.

Who is not called to account on  
this day?

For the remembrance of every  
creature comes before You,  
Each one's deeds and his record,  
Each man's steps and movement,  
Each person's thoughts and plans,  
And the designs underlying  
each act.

Again, there are Biblical verses about those like Adam and Noah who have been remembered and judged by God on the anniversary of man's creation (*Zikhronot*). Rav now reaches the third and climactic theme—the significance of the sounding of the shofar as a reminder that God is our King and our Judge. You were revealed to Your people at Sinai, declares the liturgical reminder that God is our King and poet. The nations of the world trembled when they heard Your majestic voice, amidst flashes of fire, imparting the Torah and commandments to Israel. Simultaneously, the shofar

sounded, its blast growing louder and louder. Some day the shofar will again be heard as the herald of our freedom.

In the period before the Arab conquest of Palestine in 635, three centuries after Rav, there arose a school of Palestinian poets who revitalized Hebrew religious poetry. It is not generally realized that for 1000 years after the destruction of the Temple there remained an important and creative Jewish community in Palestine. It was only with the advent of the crusaders that this community was virtually destroyed.

The synagogue poets were called *payetanim*. Most prominent of the *payetanim* was Eleazar Kalir whose work I discussed in last year's issue of the *Review*. He served as a *hazzan* in Palestine, probably at the beginning of the seventh century. Kalir was widely imitated by poets in Jewish communities in Asia, Africa and Europe who delighted in his subtle treatment of liturgical themes, in his Biblical and Midrashic allusions, in his clever use of rhyme and refrain and in his fertile language.

Notable among his successors and imitators was Simeon the Great of Mayence (Simeon ben Isaac ben Abun) who helped to make Mayence one of the leading centers of learning during the 10th and 11th centuries. Simeon's poetic compositions are read especially on the second day of Rosh Hashanah and include the popular *Melekh Elyon*. (Silverman, *High Holiday Prayer Book*, p. 85). The poet contrasts the work of the Supreme King and of a mortal king. As in so many of the other *piyutim* the use of a refrain encourages a dialogue between *hazzan* and congregation.

Simeon the Great was highly respected by the secular rulers and seems to have been influential in preventing persecution of his Jewish brethren. According to a familiar legend he is the father of Jochanan who was kidnapped and forcibly converted as a child and who later became Pope. According to one version of the popular legend Simeon, unaware of his son's fate, sought an audience with the Pope in order to avert an impending anti-Jew-

ish decree. The audience was granted. Before discussing the reason for the visit the Pope invited Simeon to play chess. In the course of the game the Pope used a secret move which Simeon had once taught Jochanan, and thus the father recognized his son. Legend has it that not only was Simeon's request in behalf of the Jewish community granted but that the Pope disappeared shortly thereafter and reverted to Judaism.

A famous contemporary of Simeon is Meshullam the Great (Meshullam ben Kalonymos), scion of an illustrious Italian-Jewish family. Members of the Kalonymos family had been invited by Charlemagne to disseminate their learning in the Frankish empire. Meshullam the Great, originally of Rome, later migrated to Mayence. He is author of the popular *Imru Le-lohim* (Silverman, p. 280). This poem, like the one by Simeon mentioned above, presents a contrast between immortal Divinity and mortal kings:

Say ye of God

He has established His throne  
for justice.

The foundation of His throne is  
righteousness and justice.

God of justice, His hand meets  
out justice.

May He therefore be praised of  
whom it was written:

"And the Lord of Hosts was  
exalted in justice."

The ark has been opened during the recitation of this *piyut* as the worshippers rise. For a fleeting moment the curtain is drawn and the ark is closed as the poet condemns the work of man "whose designs are treacherous and who dwells in the midst of deceit." In a sense, the poet is declaring his independence of the secular rulers who had treated Israel so cruelly. But the ark is reopened as the poet describes once more the work of God "who harkens unto prayer and whose Torah brings joy." Meshullam is also the author of the impressive *Avodah* service which recalls the ritual conducted

by the *Kohen Gadol* in the ancient Temple on the Day of Atonement.

Meshullam's son, Kalonymos, also of Mayence has gained fame as the composer of the impressive *U-netaneh Tokef*. This solemn composition describes the awesome destiny that may await us, but asserts that "Repentance, prayer and righteousness avert the evil decree." According to the familiar legend the prayer was originally composed by Amnon of Mayence who was cruelly tortured by the ruler for refusing to convert. With his dying breath Amnon recited an improvised prayer before the open ark on Rosh Hashanah and later appeared in a dream to Kalonymos who wrote down and immortalized the words of the prayer.

Kalir, Simeon the Great, Meshullam and his son Kalonymos are among the better-known *payetanim*. Dr. Israel Davidson in his *Thesaurus of Medieval Hebrew Poetry* lists 35,000 religious poems by almost 3000 poets. Thousands of other poems remain to be identified; innumerable poems, of course, have been lost.

Unfortunately, the greatest of the medieval poets who flourished in Spain such as Judah Halevi, Solomon ibn Gabirol and Moses ibn Ezra are not adequately represented in the liturgy. But modern editors of the holiday prayer-book have included their poems as well as poems by modern poets such as Bialik.

The importance of the contribution of the *payetanim* is emphasized by Professor Shalom Spiegel who wrote

"The poets of the Middle Ages kept the windows in the house of prayer open to the breezes of the green outdoors. Spontaneous piety continually interrupts the order of established service and quickens it with a breath of fragrant life. New expression adds relevance to the legacy of ages, and the timelessness is enhanced by the timely."

The poet stands alongside of the prophet and sage as one of the great spokesmen of our people.

## No Echo To God's Words

Continued from Page 4

on that single Hebrew word was a sufficient deterrent to our departing from the straight and narrow path of righteousness. And to make their injunction still more emphatic, the father or mother would add: "*Lo mit an aleph!*" (*Lo*, as spelled with an *aleph*).

In Hebrew, there are two same-sounding words, *Lo*, but differently spelled. There is the *Lo* with an *Aleph*, which means "No" or "Do not," and there is the *Lo* spelled with a *Vav*, meaning "To or for him." The parent wanted the child to know which *Lo* he was to heed—*Lo mit an aleph*—the *Lo* which had the warning, No! That *Lo* is no longer heard. If anything, the second *Lo*, with a *vav*, has taken its place; everything that is for him that serves him, has become valid—no matter how illegal or immoral the act may be. There is an extreme permissiveness permeating the world today—among the young and the old. The echo has drowned out the *Lo* with the *aleph*!

While still standing at the foot of Sinai, the Israelites made and worshipped the golden calf. It was only the fervent plea of Moses in behalf of the people which won God's forgiveness; and the second tablets of Gods Law were then given. A second chance was offered to the people. The second tablets were given, according to Jewish tradition, on the tenth of Tishre; and to commemorate that event, when God said *salachti*, "I have forgiven," *Yom Kippur* was assigned to that date.

The world is in a mess today. Our youth is searching for a new ethical way of life. The answer is in the re-vitalization of the moral standards of life. A second chance is offered us. We can win God's forgiveness if we listen not to the echo, but to the clear sounding word *Lo* in God's commandments. If we regain the sense of sin, only then can we build a new world order of peace, justice and righteousness to guide and rule the lives of all men!



# THE SHOFAR BLASTS

*Reflections on the Shofar and Akedah*

By David Rudavsky

Professor of Hebraic Studies, New York University

A hushed solemnity pervades the traditional synagogue as the *Makri*, or prompter, usually the rabbi or other venerable member of the congregation, softly intones the solomn word: "*Tekiah!*" In response, the *Baal Tokeah*, or shofar-blower, dressed in a *Kittel*, his head wrapped in his *Talith*, emits from the shofar a single, sharply rising, shrill note that pierces the sacred tension in the synagogue and causes a tremor in every heart.

What meaning had this ritual for our fathers and does it have for us, aside from its aesthetic aspect? The *Zohar*, the medieval, mystical text which sees hidden symbols in this, as in other religious ceremonies, explains the *Tekiah* blast as a *Kol Lehitortut*, a call to alertness and awakening. Actually, this purpose is revealed in the Biblical verse: "Whosoever heareth the voice of the shofar and heedeth not, if the sword come and take him away, his blood shall be upon his own head." (Ez 33:4). Another Biblical illustration: "Shall the shofar be blown in the city and the people not tremble?" (Amos 3:6). It is this idea that may have prompted Maimonides' interpretation of the shofar as exhorting the worshippers to "remember your Creator, . . . ye who forget eternal truths because of the transient vanities, pursuing passing fancies all your years . . . look into your souls and mend your ways and deeds!" (Mishneh Torah Hilchot Teshuvah 3:4) This, of course, is a call for a *Heshbon Hanefesh*, or spiritual reckoning.

The *Tekiah* fades away; the *makri* announces the *Shevarim*—a weird, broken series of quavers like successive gasps. These sounds suggest pain, sorrow and the suffering in the world. They plead with us and point up our obligations to alleviate them. This should be a major goal in our lives. Through such action we shall leave our imprints on the sands of time.

The *Shevarim* are followed by the staccato blasts of the *Truah*, a wailing outcry, explained by some rabbis in the Talmud as *genuhei genah*, a mourning sound, and by others as a *yelulei yelal*, a wailing cry. In either case, the *Truah* may be regarded as similar in meaning to the *Shevarim*. The *Truah* in the Bible is, however, also a summons to battle, (Jer 4:19) in a religious sense, a battle against injustice, society's as well as the individual's moral transgressions. We must combat the evils of war, pollution, overpopulation, slums and all such ills. We must strive to establish the Kingdom of God on earth, and the ultimate union of all the children of man into a "fellowship to do Thy will with a perfect heart" as we pray in the Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur *Amidah*.

## THE AKEDAH

The shofar is a ram's horn. Tradition explains its use because of the episode in the *Akedah* or binding of Isaac as a near sacrifice on the altar. In this tale, Abraham substituted a ram "caught in the thicket by its horns," as a sacrifice instead of Isaac. (Gen 22:13). In his readiness to offer up his son, his most precious possession to God, Abraham demonstrated his complete, unflinching loyalty and faithfulness to Him. Critical Bible scholars generally interpret this story as a protest against the common practice of child sacrifice prevailing among the ancient Semites, Egyptians, Celts, Romans and other peoples, as a means of appeasing their deities. In the Hebrew Scriptures, this act of barbarism is denounced as an abomination of the Lord. (Deut 12:31; Jer 7:31 ff).

Because the *Akedah* has been viewed as an example of total religious devotion and surrender, the theme has become very popular in Christianity and Islam, both daughter religions of Judaism. Jesus' crucifixion has been spoken of as an *Akedah* by the Church Fathers. In the Koran, this episode is

linked with Ishmael, Abraham's son by his concubine Hagar, presumed to be the progenitor of the Arabs, and not with Isaac, the "son of his old age," by his wife Sarah. The *Akedah* has also been a favorite subject in religious art for centuries.

To the medieval Jews, the *Akedah* served as an example of *Kiddush Hashem*, the hallowing of God's name through religious martyrdom. When the crusades swept through Europe at the end of the eleventh century and also in later times, when Jews were given a choice of either accepting baptism or death, thousands chose the latter through self-slaughter. Before taking their own lives, however, they slew their children to avoid their being snatched away and baptized. Unlike Isaac's *Akedah*, however, the lives of the martyrs were not spared. It appears quite ironic that a holy crusade for the sake of religion should bring in its wake massacres and destruction of human lives.

The idea of *Kiddush Hashem* reached unprecedented genocidal proportions in the unspeakable barbarities of the Nazi Holocaust in which six million Jews were starved, gassed and murdered for no other crime than the irredeemable offense of being Jews. The question that victims and witnesses asked was "Where was God in Auschwitz?" Elie Wiesel flaunts this accusation against God in his recollection of the Rosh Hashanah eve service at the Nazi Buna Concentration Camp, located near Auschwitz. As the worshippers repeated the familiar response in the Shema, "Blessed be the name of His glorious Kingdom for ever and ever," Wiesel reflected:

Why, but why should I bless Him? In every fiber I rebelled Because He had thousands of children burning in His pits? Because He kept six crematoria burning day and night? Because in His great might He had created Auschwitz, Birkenau, Buna and so many other factories of death? How could I say to Him, "Blessed art Thou Eternal who chose us from

*(Continued on Page 55)*



# NEWS OF THE CENTER

## NEW YEAR GREETINGS FROM OFFICERS AND STAFF

ON THE eve of the Jewish New Year 5734, the officers of the Brooklyn Jewish Center extend to all the members and friends of our institution their best wishes for a year of health, happiness and joy. May we, together with all mankind, be blessed with peace and prosperity.

In this hour, as the New Year is ushered in, we, the officers of this Institution, take this opportunity of thanking all our members for their devotion and loyalty to our Center. We are confident that with the co-operation of our membership the year 5734 will be crowned with new achievements and success in our work on behalf of our community and our people.

*L'shonoh Tovo Tikosevu!*

Emanuel Cohen, *President*

Hon. Maurice Bernhardt,

*Hon. Vice-Pres.*

Julius Kushner, *Hon. Vice-Pres.*

Abraham M. Lindenbaum,

*Vice-Pres.*

Harry Leventhal, *Vice-Pres.*

Benj. Markowe, *Vice Pres.*

Meyer Abrams, *Treasurer*

Aaron Gottlieb, *Hon. Treasurer*

Louis Kramer, *Secretary*

Harry Blickstein, *Hon. Secretary*

## From the Center Staff

On behalf of the Center Staff I extend to the rabbis, officers, trustees, governors and members of the Brooklyn Jewish Center and their families cordial greetings and best wishes for the New Year.

MARTIN LERNER,  
*Executive Director.*

## From the Sisterhood

The officers of the Sisterhood extend heartiest New Year Greetings to all of our members and their families. Sisterhood looks back with pride and satisfaction on its activities during the year 5733 and hopes for an even more successful season in 5734.

With best wishes for a *Shono Tova Umesuka.*

Mrs. Isaac Franco, *President*

Mrs. Wm. Sauler

Mrs. Max I. Cohen

Mrs. Charles Marks

*Vice Presidents*

Mrs. Charles Marks, *Fin. Secy.*

Mrs. Max Farb, *Rec. Secy.*

Mrs. Benjamin Wisner, *Corr. Secy.*

Mrs. Isidore Beris, *Social Secy.*

Mrs. Benjamin Moskowitz

*Fund Raising*

## From the Men's Club

The officers of the Men's Club wish all its members, families and friends a year of health and good tidings. A year that will bring true peace to our beloved land, to the State of Israel and all mankind.

We invite each and everyone of you to participate in this coming year's events.

May the Good Lord bless the entire Center and may we and our families all be inscribed in the Book of Life and Happiness.

*"L'shonoh Tovo Tikosevu."*

Stanley Bresnick

*President*

Louis Kramer

Dr. Milton Schiff

Louis Moskowitz

*Honorary Presidents*

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Chas. Marks

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*Financial Secretary*

Murray Rosof

*Treasurer*

Max Farb

*Recording Secretary*

Murry Greenberg

*Administrative Asst.*

## SABBATH WORSHIP

**Week of September 21**

*Kindling of Candles: 6:35 P.M.*

*Services: 7:00 P.M.*

## SABBATH MORNING SERVICES

September 22—8:30 A.M.

Sidra: "Nitzavim - Vayelekh"

Deuteronomy: 29:9-31:30

Prophets: Isaiah 61:10-63:9

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## SELIHOT SERVICES

**Sunday Morning, Sept. 23rd**

7:30 A.M.

*Conducted by*

**CANTOR WILLIAM SAULER**

*and the choir*

*Directed by*

**MR. JERROLD SHAKOFSKY**

## Center Membership

As we enter the New Year season we feel the urge to work just a bit harder to keep our Membership enrollment at a rising level. So we ask again and again that EVERY MEMBER GET A MEMBER — and then some more.

Unfortunately so many of our Jewish neighbors don't voluntarily affiliate themselves with Synagogues. By a process of education we must teach them that Synagogue membership will give them a feeling of self-respect in that they will help support an institution which serves them as it does all Jews. There are those who would like to affiliate but cannot afford to. They are nevertheless made welcome. Our faith teaches us that it is the obligation of the strong to support the weak.

Special brochures will be mailed to your friends upon request.

**Brooklyn Jewish Center Review**

## HIGH HOLY DAYS SERVICES

### Rosh Hashanah

Services for Rosh Hashanah will be held on Wednesday and Thursday evenings, September 26 and 27 at 6:40 o'clock; and Thursday and Friday mornings, September 27 and 28 at 7:30 o'clock. The Torah reading will commence at 9:15 A.M. The shofar will be sounded on September 28 at 10:15 A.M. All worshippers are requested to be in their seats before that hour. The sermon on both days will be preached at about 10:30 A.M. The doors will be closed while the sermon is delivered. The Musaf services will begin at 11:00 o'clock, and the services will finish at approximately 1:15 o'clock.

### Rosh Hashanah Sermons

The sermons will be preached on both days of Rosh Hashanah at 10:30 o'clock.

Rabbi Levinthal will preach on the first day of Rosh Hashanah.

Rabbi Haymovitz will preach the sermon on the second day.

### Yom Kippur

The Kol Nidre services which usher in the Fast of Yom Kippur will be held on Friday evening, October 5 at 6:25 o'clock.

Yom Kippur services will begin on Saturday morning, October 6 at 8:30 o'clock. The Yizkor service will be held at 11:15 A.M.

On Yom Kippur Eve, the sermon by Rabbi Levinthal will be preached immediately after the chanting of Kol Nidre. On Yom Kippur morning, the sermon by Rabbi Haymovitz will follow the Memorial Services.

### Cantor and Choir to Officiate in Main Synagogue

Our Cantor, Rev. William Sauler, will officiate at the services to be conducted on Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur in the main synagogue. He will be assisted by the Choir under the direction of Mr. Jerrold Shafsky.

## YOUTH CONGREGATIONS

The Rosh Hashanah services in the Youth Congregation will be held on Thursday and Friday, September 27 and 28 at 10:00 A.M.

The Kol Nidre services will be held on Friday evening, October 5, at 6:25 o'clock.

The services on Yom Kippur will be held Saturday morning, October 6, at 10:00 A.M. and 5:00 P.M.

### Candle Lighting During High Holy Days

Candles will be lit for the Rosh Hashanah holidays on Wednesday, September 26, at 6:27 P.M. and Thursday, September 27, at 7:30 P.M.

On Friday evening, October 5, (Kol Nidre) candles will be lit at 6:12 P.M.

### Additional Yizkor Services

For the benefit of the community, the Center will conduct special Yizkor services on Yom Kippur, Saturday morning, October 6, in the Dining Room of our building, at 10:00 o'clock.

### Holiday Gym Schedule

The Gym and Baths Department will be closed Thursday and Friday, September 27 & 28 for the Rosh Hashanah holiday and will reopen on Sunday morning, September 29 at 10:00 A.M., for men.

The following week, the department will be open, Friday, Oct. 5, evening Yom Kippur from 12:00 to 3:00 P.M.

## YOUNG ADULT CONGREGATION

meets regularly

### EACH SABBATH AND HOLIDAY

All children and young adults are welcome.

## SUCCOTH SERVICES

Kindling of Candles:

Wednesday, October 10 — 6:04 P.M.

Thursday, October 11 — 7:07 P.M.

Services — 6:15 P.M.

Thursday and Friday Mornings  
October 11 & 12 — 8:30 A.M.

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## CONCLUDING SUCCOTH SERVICES

Kindling of Candles:

Wednesday Eve., Oct. 17 — 5:53 P.M.

Thursday Eve., Oct. 18 — 6:57 P.M.

Services — 6:15 P.M.

Thursday & Friday  
Oct. 18 & 19

Services — 8:30 A.M.

Memorial Services — Thurs., Oct. 18  
10:15 A.M.

## Ten Men Make A Minyan

Religious services are scheduled at the Center every morning and every evening of the year. Only in public services (services with a minyan) may Kaddish be said and on Saturday, Monday and Thursday mornings and Saturday afternoons may the Torah be read.

Unfortunately, there are times when we fall short of the requisite ten for a minyan and so our service is limited. Thus, those in mourning and those observing *yahrzeit* cannot say Kaddish.

Your presence at services, even once a week, once in two weeks, or once a month—may make the difference between our having a minyan and not having a minyan. We appeal particularly to those who come here at time of *yahrzeit* and expect to find a minyan to join us at other times as well so that the expectations of others may also be fulfilled. IT'S ONLY FAIR, ISN'T IT?



# ROSH HASHANAH GREETINGS

*A Very Happy*

*New Year*

FROM

MR. and MRS.

EDWARD ISAACS

80 PARK AVENUE

NEW YORK CITY

*Greetings*

*for the*

*New Year*

FROM

MR. and MRS.

EMANUEL COHEN

10 Plaza Street

*New Year Greetings*

*from*

HON. and MRS.

STANLEY STEINGUT

1199 East 53rd Street



*Best Wishes For*  
*A Happy New Year*

FROM

**MRS. LAZARUS MARCUS**

61 Eastern Parkway

*New Year Greetings*

FROM

MR. and MRS.

JEFFREY AARON

AND FAMILY

57-68 228th Street

Bayside, N. Y.

TO OUR VENERABLE RABBIS,  
OFFICERS AND MEMBERS  
OF OUR CENTER

*A Happy, Healthy and  
Joyous New Year*

MR. and MRS.  
DAVID H. SCHATZOW

65-24 162nd STREET  
FLUSHING, NEW YORK



*A Very Happy*

*New Year*

*from*

**MRS. LOUIS KOCH**

**AND FAMILY**

**200 CENTRAL PARK SOUTH**

**NEW YORK, N. Y.**

*A HAPPY NEW YEAR*

from

*Ratner's*

DAIRY RESTAURANT

138 DELANCEY STREET

Foot of Williamsburg Bridge

New York 2, N. Y.

Tel. ORchard 7-5588

Office: GRamercy 7-6226

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*A Happy New Year*

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MR. and MRS.

MURRAY GOLDSMITH

400 East 56th Street

New York, N. Y.

**DR. and MRS. HERMAN BROWMAN**

and FAMILY

1540 President Street

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לשנה טובה תכתבו

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**MR. and MRS. LOUIS MOSKOWITZ**

and FAMILY



DR. HAROLD and BIANCA BERGMAN

3100 Ocean Parkway

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*A Happy New Year*

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MR. and MRS.  
REUBEN FRIEMAN

50 Brompton Road

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**MR. and MRS.  
HARRY LEVENTHAL**

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MRS. THEODORE D. OSTROW

and SONS

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370 Ocean Parkway

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ARTHUR FRIED

and FAMILY

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and Children

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**MRS. GUSSIE HUTT**

768 East 18th Street

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**MR. and MRS.  
LAWRENCE SCHIFF**

135 Eastern Parkway



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135 Eastern Parkway

MR. MILTON KRAMER  
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MR. and MRS.  
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**MILTON BERGER**  
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**LOUIS AND SYLVIA B. KRAMER**

20 Plaza Street

**MISS DORA LEAKS**

152 Quincy Street

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*A Happy New Year*

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**ARNOLD M. SCHWARTZ**  
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*A Happy New Year*

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225 Central Park West  
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**ALVIN GLICKMAN**

2900 Ocean Parkway

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**ABRAHAM FRIEDMAN**  
and FAMILY

**MR. and MRS.**  
**MARTIN LERNER**  
and FAMILY

**The Office, Maintenance, Gym**  
**and Bath Staff**  
of the  
**BROOKLYN JEWISH CENTER**

THE  
SISTERHOOD  
of the  
BROOKLYN JEWISH CENTER

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THE MEN'S CLUB  
of the  
BROOKLYN JEWISH CENTER

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THE GOLDEN AGE CLUB  
of the  
BROOKLYN JEWISH CENTER

THE ADULT CONGREGATION  
of the  
BROOKLYN JEWISH CENTER

•

THE ADULT LEAGUE  
of the  
BROOKLYN JEWISH CENTER

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*A Happy New Year*

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and FAMILY  
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## American Jewry

(Continued from Page 6)

American Jewry should re-examine its status and the problems facing it, and reappraise them in the light of the new realities, and against the background of the general crisis which American society is undergoing.

Just as the strong and rich American society has much better prospects of surviving its crises than other weaker societies, so is American Jewry objectively more immune to its crises than other Jewish communities. American Jewry grew up in a large and powerful country, rich in resources, and it developed in conditions of civil equality and democratic rule. Its numerical strength, its economic status and its store of intellectual forces, together with its way of life in a free society, all combined to lend it both the ability to help itself, and the ability to defend itself in a constructive way to a degree that did not exist in any other community of the diaspora.

Nevertheless, American Jewry's strength contains also the seeds of its own weakness, which is a spiritual weakness. In order to be able to utilize its objective advantages efficiently, it must first get to know itself, its reality and its status within the general society. Now, the lack of a comprehensive, sociological research on American Jewry is particularly felt. Jewish sociologists have confined themselves to the problems of a particular nature and have not attempted to make a profound and comprehensive analysis of the Jews' general social situation.

Strong forces are operating which drive Jews to their Judaism, to self-identification, to national renaissance and to the Zionist realization. We don't know how fast this process will take place, and how many there will be in the foreseeable future whose objective experience will reflect itself in Jewish consciousness and decision. But it is beyond doubt that the center of gravity of the operation of forces in American society is with those who perceive the importance of full Jewish

identification. The Jewish masses have lost faith in the great ideals of America and the solution for their problem. They are disappointed in liberalism and in brotherhood and can see only a strong Jewish identity and a strong Jewish stand as an answer to their problems. They want a better Jewish education for their children and for the adults as a protection against assimilation and loss of identity. They consider ignorance of Judaism as a curse and as a real threat to their survival, and they demand of Jewish leadership to show them the way.

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## The Shofar Blasts

(Continued from Page 9)

amongst the races to be tortured day and night, to see our fathers, our mothers, our brothers end in the crematorium? Praised be Thy Holy Name, Thou, Who has chosen us to be butchered on Thine altars!

This unanswerable charge could be lodged by the Jew, Abraham, who challenged his God: "Shall the judge of all the earth Himself not do justice?" (Gen 18:25). It could be the voice of a Job, the non-Jew, protesting his torture and punishment, though he was innocent of sin and guilt. It could be the agonizing cry of a Jeremiah: "Why do the ways of the wicked prosper?" (Jer 12:1) It is in the tradition of an Isaac of Berditchev, defending his people against the God who suffered them to be tormented and slaughtered despite their loyalty to Him.

But what was the reply that the injured and aggrieved Job received? He was merely asked how a human, who cannot understand the mysteries of nature can deign to understand the Divine plan. This response may appear evasive but did not Yedaiah Hapenini of Beziers (ca 1270-1340) pointedly say: "To know Him I would have to be Him!" Perhaps Maimonides had this same idea in mind when he as-

serted, as did other philosophers, that we cannot ascribe to God the positive attributes of being and existence, or wisdom, mercy, or righteousness which are all human characteristics. We can only logically refute His non-existence and lack of these attributes. We cannot say, for example, that God lives, for the only life we mortals know is a product of our own limited experience, and God's life is not man's, nor are His other qualities like ours or knowable. We can merely say negatively that He is not dead or inanimate, nor unwise, nor unmerciful, nor unrighteous. In other words, as finite beings, we cannot grasp the Infinite or His Divine nature or essence; nor can we venture to create God in our image. We can merely attempt to acquire more knowledge of God and to "Seek the Lord where He is found" (Is 55:6).

This explains Judaism's stress on the mitzvoh or precepts, rather than on metaphysical or theological speculation. The Holy Scriptures teach us: "The secret things belong to the Lord, our God, but the revealed things belong to us and our children for ever, that we may do all the words of the Torah." (Deut 29:28). Through deeds and ethical conduct we must aspire to attain the godly state and the sacred ideals set forth in the verses: "Lord, who shall sojourn in Thy tabernacle?"

... He that walketh uprightly and worketh righteousness and speaketh truth in his heart ... nor doeth evil to his fellow." (Ps XV). To surrender these ideals would divest the martyrdom of the six million of meaning and would spell the victory of Hitlerism. Mankind must not give up the hope of attaining them. The slogan in the midst of the misery of the ghettos and the hell of the concentration camps was: "Yidden, seit sich nicht mcyasht!" (Jews, do not despair) and even on the brink of death in the gas chambers of Auschwitz, the victims sang in spiritual triumph: "I believe with a firm faith in the coming of the Messiah, and though He tarry, I will wait daily for His coming!"

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